

May 8, 2001

WATER QUALITY

ARKANSAS RIVER WATER QUALITY INITIATIVE.

Chris Cherches

City Manager reviewed the Item.

Agenda Report No. 01-0596.

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) has identified portions of the Arkansas River and Little Arkansas River as being impaired for recreational use based on current water quality standards for bacterial levels (fecal coliform). The City has recently experienced impaired water quality in portions of the River that traverses through its City limits. The results of various studies, testing and publicity relating to concerns about recreational uses of the Arkansas River have resulted in a renewed focus toward water quality issues relating to the Arkansas River.

To address these issues and concerns, the City of Wichita, in cooperation with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, has significantly expanded sampling and monitoring of the two Rivers and have collaborated on a Mayor's Arkansas River Symposium (attended by over 200 individuals representing various organizations, state and local governments, and interested citizens). One of the critical components of the Symposium was to solicit ideas and action items needed to improve the overall Arkansas River quality. The results from the Symposium focused on the following actions:

- Identification and quantification of the source of the pollution problems.
- Development a public education program
- Development of a long-range plan to address Arkansas River Water Quality Issues
- Establish an Arkansas River Advisory Task Force

All of the items, with the exception of the establishment of the Task Force, have been addressed in varying degrees resulting in the following actions:

1. Congress has appropriated \$2.3 million for addressing Arkansas River Water Quality issues (\$2.0 million for projects to improve water quality and \$300,000 for assessment, studies, investigation and long range planning).
2. A consultant (HDR Inc.) was selected to conduct environmental engineering services/surveys. The consultants have been tasked to create a data base of historical and new water quality data, identify pollution sources, assist in public education, and develop a long-range plan to address water quality issues on the Arkansas River.
3. A public information program, involving a logo with an action statement "Our River Our Responsibility" has been developed along with an informational brochure and plans for creating community awareness about river issues, including the use of the City of Wichita's official website for data and information.

To address one of the remaining action steps of the Symposium is the establishment of an Advisory Committee. Because of the importance of the River and its water quality, it is imperative that both public and private support

be obtained. And, because of the number of interested parties and divergent interests, it is vital to have open communication and involvement of all public and private partners in the effort. To ensure citizen involvement, it is recommended that two groups be appointed: the first group would be a Technical Task Force, appointed by the City Manager and comprised of technical, academic and professional individuals with appropriate background, expertise and experience water quality, biology, environmental and other technical areas. The role of this Task Force will be work with the consultants during its various phases of study/surveying, evaluate data from testing/monitoring, assist in formulating the long-range River improvement plan, and to provide technical guidance to state and local governments along with other interests to reduce pollution and restore water quality. The Technical Task Force will also deal with issues relating to water quality studies, chemical and biological impacts, stream flows, environmental and health issues.

The second group, the River Advisory Committee, appointed by the Mayor, would involve a larger and more diverse group of individuals who have special interests or represent organizations active in support of the River and its water quality. This Committee will be involved in providing a two-way communication linkage to the diverse elements within the community and river basin, serving as a liaison to their respective organizations or interest groups, assist in building a consensus for the various programs that will be initiated to eliminate pollution in the River, assist in the review and implementation of the public education program, provide input into the development of the long-range River improvement plan, and look at issues relating to building partnerships with the various stakeholders impacting the River quality, develop and maintain Best Practices information, develop effective legislative support for Arkansas River initiatives, and perform in other advisory capacities. This Committee is not intended to be involved in the technical or enforcement roles involving water quality issues.

The City, along with representatives from the State, will be active in support of both the Technical Task Force and River Advisory Committee. Costs will be minimal except for materials, copying and mailing costs, and staff time required to service both groups. It is estimated that a budget expense of approximately \$10,000/annually will be required.

The City Council has the authority to establish advisory groups, as required.

Mayor Knight

Mayor Knight inquired if anyone wished to be heard and no one appeared.

Mayor Knight

Knight appointed Council Members Martz and Fearey to co-chair the River Advisory Committee.
Other Council Members are to notify Martz and Fearey of selection of representatives to the Committee.

Motion --

Knight moved that the City Council approve the establishment of the River Advisory Committee and approve the appointments to the committee; request that the City Manager establish and appoint a Technical Advisory Task Force; and authorize necessary budget adjustments in support of both groups.

-- carried

Motion carried 6 to 0. (Brewer absent)